

1949-1960

Panel 1.9

1949 boundaries of the newly created Flood Control District

FLORIDA CREATES
FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT

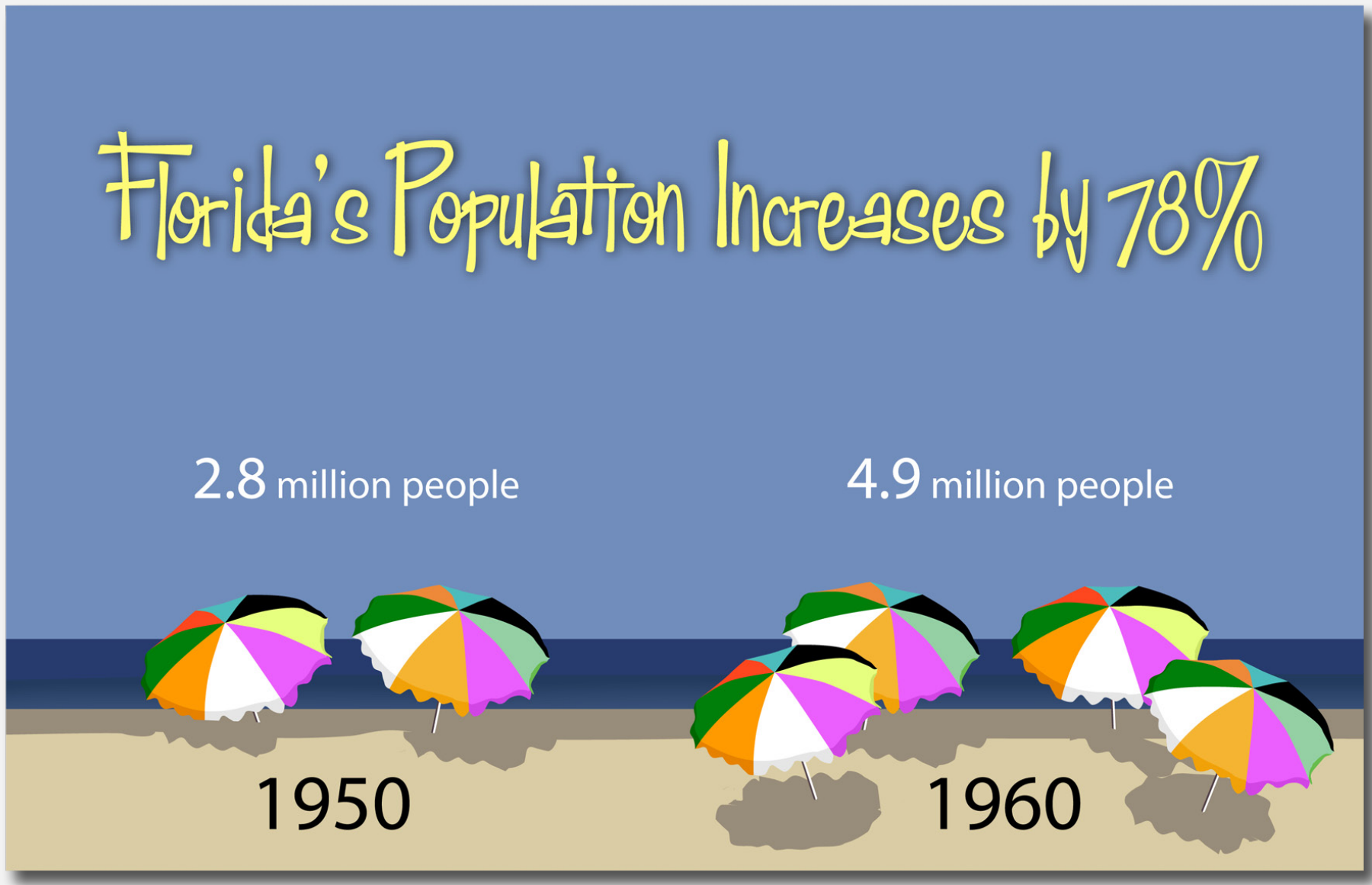
Under Florida Governor Warren Fuller, the state legislature creates an agency to act as the local authority for the Central and Southern Florida Project. The new Flood Control District will provide lands for the public works project under way and operation and maintenance once completed. Prosperity in post-World War II years contributes to a boom in land sales and babies. Between 1950 and 1960, Florida’s population grows almost 78 percent — from 2.8 million to 4.9 million (with 1.7 million in South Florida). The influx of Cuban immigrants increases after Fidel Castro’s 1959 takeover of Cuba, just 90 miles from Florida’s coast.

1949

The state legislature creates the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District (FCD). The agency is the local sponsor for the federal flood control project. The FCD assumes the responsibilities of the now-abolished Everglades Drainage and Okeechobee Flood Control districts. The state passes a General Appropriations Act to include \$3.25 million as the local share for the flood control project. (Subsequent funding for land, as well as operation and maintenance, will come from ad valorem taxes on property in the FCD.) The FCD encompasses all or part of 17 counties (later changed to 16) in central and southern Florida, totaling approximately 16,000 square miles.

1949

Construction of the massive public works system begins. A series of canals, levees, water retention areas, pump stations and gated water control structures are built on the “spine” of former drainage efforts. New construction follows natural hydrologic basins, using gravity and the slope of the land (when possible) to drain water off into the canals. Massive pump stations are erected to move the water when gravity cannot. Structures with movable gates also assist by discharging excess water away or by retaining water when closed. Three water conservation areas that retain surface water and help to recharge aquifers for water supply during the dry season are major project components.



State legislation authorizes the Flood Control District to establish a five-member, non-salaried board, appointed by the governor



Final burning of Everglades Drainage District bonds, 1956

1954

The Flood Control Act of 1954 is authorized by Congress. It authorizes the second phase of the Central and Southern Florida Project. Subsequent improvements are authorized by the Flood Control Acts of 1958, 1960, 1962 and 1965. As construction progresses, the National Park Service expresses concerns about impacts of the project to plants and wildlife. Concurrently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is coordinating efforts to determine how much the water conservation areas can store “to insure ... maximum benefits for wildlife resources.” The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assures the Department of Interior that it will work with all relevant agencies to ensure fish and wildlife preservation is an important feature of the project. However, the clamor of the people is first and foremost for water supply and flood control.



Floating crane working on the Central and Southern Florida Project at Lake Okeechobee



By 1960, six pumping stations are serving the dual purposes of flood control and water supply. Construction of the Central and Southern Florida Project creates the EAA south of the lake and water conservation areas between the EAA and the east coast

1960

Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) levees are completed. From 1950 to 1960, the Corps digs 128 miles of canals and improves or constructs 300 miles of levees. At the eastern edge of the Everglades, a levee is constructed to stop water from flowing east. Canals are dug from the levee to the ocean to drain the water. No longer subject to periodic flooding, the area becomes suitable for agriculture and later for urban development. The East Coast Protective Levee isolates 160 square miles of Everglades marsh and severs an additional 775 square miles of tributary watershed.